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TAGS: [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [UNGA](#)
SUBJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE: FURTHER DETAIL ON SEPTEMBER UN
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT

REF: A. USUN 276 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. USUN 233 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. USUN 302

Summary

1, (SBU) A recently obtained new UN internal memo indicates that, following a round of consultations with key member states, the Secretary-General will decide by the end of May on a high-level UN event on climate change tentatively scheduled for September 24, with the announcement to come by or during the G-8 summit in June. Three envoys will be dispatched to consult on specific format and an outcome document for the event that is intended to produce guidelines and a possible deadline for future climate change negotiations. The USG has until May 20 to influence UN thinking on this proposed event. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Further to ref A, Mission received in recent days a copy of another internal UN memo entitled "Secretary-General's Strategic Initiative on Climate Change: A Background Note for the Secretary-General's Envoys" that provides further clarity on the UN Secretariat's vision for a "high-level meeting at the margins of the General Assembly in September" on climate change. A copy of the document has been forwarded to the Department (IO/EDA and OES/EGC).

The Purpose

[1](#)3. (SBU) According to the memo, the SYG will take a final decision on convening a high-level climate event on the margins of the UNGA by the end of May, with a view to announcing the event during the G-8 Summit in June. The SYG will use the time until late May to consult key governments directly and through dispatch of three envoys. Principal objectives for the high-level event are: engage non-traditional high-level decision-makers; maintain public pressure on governments to come to agreement on next steps in multilateral climate change negotiations; set a deadline for conclusion of those negotiations; and solidify the UN as the international locus for addressing climate change in all of its dimensions.

The Envoys and Their Mission

14. (SBU) The three envoys are: Gro Harlem Brundtland (former Norway PM, ex-DG of the World Health Organization, US-educated); Ricardo Lagos (former President of Chile, former ambassador to the UN, recent member of the SYG's High-Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence, US-educated); and Han Seung-soo (formerly Korean Ambassador to the US and Foreign Minister, former President of the UN General Assembly). They are assigned to consult 24 governments (plus the EU) chosen for their regional political stature or their high pollution emissions. They will engage political leaders, civil society, private sector and the media, seeking views on: modalities and substantive outcome for the high-level event (HLE); and advice for the best role for the UN and SYG in promoting action on climate change. If requested by the SYG, they will also make "targeted interventions to facilitate negotiations for a post-2012 framework." While the envoys are to report their results on the HLE to the SYG by May 20, they will continue to work through December's UN Climate Change ministerial in Bali.

High-Level Event Format

15. (SBU) The basic concept for the HLE on climate change has it taking place on September 24, the eve of the UNGA General Debate. The main event will consist of a one-hour opening (SYG speech, scientific reports and NGO statements), a four-hour interactive dialogue, a closing (with possible adoption of an outcome document), and a press conference. Attendance would be by heads of state/government or foreign ministers. That evening, the SYG would host a dinner for a select few heads of state, with priority attendees being the U.S., China, India, and chairs of key groups like the G77 and

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G8. The outcome document could either be a negotiated communique, a chair's summary, or no outcome at all, with a chair's summary deemed the most likely option. The outcome document's intended content would be "principles to guide the negotiations on future climate change cooperation," though "the establishment of a deadline for the UNFCCC process to complete its round of negotiations (2009) would be very useful."

Comment

16. (SBU) This memo appears to closely reflect the agenda of UNFCCC Executive Director Yvo de Boer in terms of using the SYG's good offices to aggressively influence states' positions ahead of the UNFCCC ministerial in Bali, as initially outlined in ref B. It is unknown which, if any, of the three envoys will be tasked with lobbying Washington, but the USG apparently has just one month to make known its views on the HLE.
KHALILZAD